

IV. DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

A. What We Believe about the Scriptures:

The Bible (Old and New Testaments) is God's special revelation to mankind (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Thes. 2:13) and comprises the sufficient and only infallible rule of faith and conduct (1 Tim. 3:15-17; Mt. 4:4). The Scriptures are completely inerrant in their original documents and pose the final authority and absolute truth in faith and life (Psm. 19:7; Jn. 17:17). Although men composed the Bible, these writers were moved by the Holy Spirit to write God's words (2 Tim. 3:16-verbal and plenary inspiration) without error and without overriding their personalities and education (2 Pet. 1:21). The Scriptures are to be interpreted literally, unless specifically called to do otherwise by the authorial intent. Though there is only one meaning for each biblical passage (2 Pet. 1:20-21), many applications may flow from that interpretation. Each believer has the responsibility to submit to the Word (Jn. 8:31) by personally ascertaining the true meaning of Scripture (Ac. 17:11) under the illumination of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12-14; 1 Jn. 2:20).

B. What We Believe about the Trinity:

There is only one true and living God (Dt. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:5-6; Jas. 2:19) existing as three Persons-Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). Each Person is divine, distinct, eternal and equally deserving of our worship and obedience. Though each member of the Godhead is the same in essence; they execute different, yet harmonious roles. Examples of the roles are seen in the work of creation (Gen. 1:26) and salvation (Eph. 1:3-14).

C. What We Believe about God the Father:

God, the Father, is an infinite, personal spirit (Jn. 4:24), perfect in all attributes (Mt. 5:48). He sustains and rules His universe in a sovereign, wise and loving way (Ac. 14:15-17; Rom. 11:36). He has decreed all things that come to pass, without approving sin (Hab. 1:13), with the intent of drawing glory to Himself (Isa. 6:3; 1 Chron. 29:11; Eph. 1:11-12; Rev. 1:6). He both hears and answers prayer (Mt. 21:22; 1 Pet. 3:12), and saves all who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:3). As Creator, He is the Father to all men (Acts 17:24-29), but He is the spiritual Father only to believers (Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 3:26).

D. What We Believe about Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ is fully God (Jn. 1:1-3; 20:28; Col. 2:9) and fully man (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:14); yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). His dual nature is unchangeable, indivisible, inseparable and without distinction. He was incarnated in the latter days (Jn. 1:14; Gal. 4:4) through the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:35) for the purpose of revealing God (Jn. 14:9) and providing redemption (Heb. 2:17; 9:12). He honored the divine Law by perfect obedience and accomplished salvation for man by His atoning work on the cross (Heb. 10:12) that involved the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death (Rev. 5:9). His voluntary and substitutionary offering (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8), predestined from eternity past (Ac. 2:23), is the only suitable means to propitiate God's wrath (1 Jn. 4:10). After His death, Jesus rose bodily on the third day (1 Cor. 15:4), ascended into heaven (Lk. 24:51) and currently rules at the right hand of God as the believer's Advocate (1

Jn. 2:1), High Priest (Heb. 7:26), Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5) and Head (Col. 1:18). He is the Lord (Lk. 6:46) and the only acceptable Savior of all mankind (Ac. 4:12; Jn. 14:6). The day will come in which He will personally and visibly return in power and glory for His bride, the church (Jn. 14:3; Ac. 1:11). He will judge all mankind (Ac. 17:31; Jn. 5:22) and consummate His redemptive mission (1 Cor. 15:23-28).

E. What We Believe about the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity (Ac. 5:3-4). The Spirit indwells every believer of the New Covenant (Jn. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19) at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9), baptizing them equally into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). He convicts the world of sin (Jn. 16:8), regenerates lives for salvation (Tit. 3:5), illuminates the Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14-15) and continually transforms believers into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). The Holy Spirit fills believers that are in submission to God (Eph. 5:18) and seals them for the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13). He sovereignly administers spiritual gifts to every member of the church (1 Cor. 12:7, 11) with the intent of glorifying Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:14). We do not believe that the charismatic gifts are administered today as they were in the early church (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4).

F. What We Believe about Man:

On the sixth literal day of creation (Gen. 1:31), God created man and woman in His own image (Gen 1:27). The chief purpose for their creation was to bring glory to God (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16). In rejecting God's benevolence and revealed will (Gen. 3:6), man disobeyed God and incurred the penalty of physical and spiritual death (Gen. 2:17). Adam's sin is imputed to all humans and this original sin causes separation from God beginning at the point of conception (Psm. 51:5; Rom. 5:12). Humans are sinners by nature, by choice and by divine declaration (Mt. 15:18-20; Jn. 3:19; Rom. 3:9-18, 23). Every unredeemed human is at enmity with God (Eph. 2:16). They are subject to His wrath (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3), utterly incapable of choosing God (Jer. 13:23; Mt. 19:25-26; Jn. 6:44) and remain totally at the mercy of God's grace to obtain salvation (Rom. 11:5-6; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5).

G. What We Believe about Salvation:

Since sinful man stands before a holy God condemned (Rom. 3:19, 23; Gal. 3:22), God from eternity past decreed to redeem some humans through Christ (Eph. 1:5). The shed blood and death of the Messiah purchased the salvation for God's elect from every generation (Rev. 5:9). The moment of salvation begins as the Holy Spirit regenerates a sinner's heart (Jn. 3:3-7) through the instrument of the Word of God (Jn. 5:24; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). These individuals have a responsibility through God's grace to freely accept Jesus by faith (Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 3:36) and repent of their sins (Mt. 4:17; Ac. 2:38). Christ's righteousness is imputed (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21) to the surrendering believer, and he or she is "set apart" (sanctified), declared "not guilty" (justified) before God (Rom. 3:26; 5:1; 1 Cor. 1:30) and delivered from condemnation to eternal life (Rom. 5:18; Tit. 3:7). Salvation is a gift solely of God's grace and not on the basis of any human merit or works (Ac. 15:11; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Though "good deeds" in no way achieve human salvation (Isa. 64:6), they give evidence of a redeemed heart and new

purpose in life (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:8; Jas. 2:14). True believers will be kept by God's power to persevere and thus can be assured of their eternal salvation (Jn. 10:27-30; Rom. 8:30, 38-39; Phil. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 Jn. 5:13; Rev. 14:12).

H. What We Believe about Christian Conduct

Christians are to make it their priority to be found pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10). They are to love God with all of their heart and love their neighbor as themselves (Mt. 22:37-40). They are to be a faithful steward of God's resources (Mt. 25:14-30). They have been delivered from sin to be a slave to righteousness (Rom. 6:11-13). In understanding their new freedom (Gal. 5:13), believers are to obediently serve only the Lord (Psm. 100:2), grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), overcome sin in the pursuit of holiness (Gen. 4:7; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Jn. 3:5-9), separate from worldliness (Jas. 4:4), live blamelessly (Phil. 2:14-15), mature in Christlikeness (Rom. 8:29) and faithfully persevere to the end (Mk. 13:13), all through the abiding presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-17; Gal. 3:3).

I. What We Believe about the Church:

Jesus Christ is the Head (Col. 1:18), Builder (Mt. 16:18) and Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) of the church. His flock is composed of all born-again believers; members of one unified, loving and living spiritual body (Jn. 13:34-35; Eph. 2:11-22; 4:3). Under the supreme authority of Christ, the church has the mandate to encourage and instruct believers through the Word (Eph. 4:11-13; 2 Tim. 4:2), discipline the unruly (Mt. 18:15-17), exercise spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11), pray (Ac. 2:42), fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25), appoint qualified men for the office of elder and deacon (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9) and advance the gospel (Mt. 28:18-20)-all under the corporate banner of worship in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17) for the glory of God (Eph. 3:21). The church is also responsible to keep the Lord's ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion (Ac. 2:38; 8:36-39) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20), wherein the elements commemorate Christ death and anticipate His return (1 Cor. 11:23-32).

J. What We Believe about the Last Things:

Every human being is destined to die physically (Heb. 9:27). Upon death, believers will immediately be ushered into the presence of God where they will enjoy heavenly rest and joyful fellowship with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23) for eternity (1 Jn. 5:11-12). They will eagerly await final glorification when they receive their resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-54; 1 Thes. 4:16). After the Great Tribulation (Mk. 13:19) Jesus will return to judge the world in a personal, visible and bodily form (Mt. 24:30-31; Ac. 1:11; 2 Pet. 3:7). Unbelievers' souls will be kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Lk. 16:19-26), when they too will be united with their bodies (Dan. 12:2). The lost will appear before the Great White Throne for judgment (Jn. 5:28-29; Rev. 20:11), and then will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13-15). In a literal hell, the reprobate will be separated from the benevolence of God and subject to eternal, conscious suffering (Mt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thes. 1:9). God will then establish a new heavens and a new earth that will exist for all eternity in righteousness (Isa. 65:17-18; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-7) whereby He may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).